

# Faithful Enquiry

AFTER THE  
ANCIENT AND ORIGINAL DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
TRINITY,

TAUGHT BY  
*CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES,*  
SO FAR AS IS SUFFICIENT FOR OUR SALVATION.

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By ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

1745.

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Jer vi 16. Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

Isa. xxxv 8. A high-way shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.



*The following Work, written by the able and pious Dr. Watts, is known but by few; and many misrepresentations have been given of his views of the important doctrine here brought forward.*

*No one can doubt or call in question the Author's motives in his serious enquiries after the truth on this point; which arose from a desire to know God, so, as to worship him aright: and it would be well if those who are so very forward in pouring out their Anathemas on the humble enquirer after Truth, would examine themselves and their creeds by the unerring word of God, and leave others who differ from them in the hands of Him who judgeth righteously.*

*This little Piece is reprinted with a design that God would be pleased, by his Spirit, to render it so far useful, as to be a mean in his hand of causing the Reader, whoever he may be, to examine the word of God for himself on the doctrine herein contained.*

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“ RIGHTEOUS art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee ; yet I may talk with thee concerning thy judgments.” Permit me, O my God and Father, to plead with thee concerning the revelations of thy nature and thy grace, which are made in thy gospel : and let me do it with all that humble reverence, and that holy awe of thy Majesty, which becomes a creature in the presence of his God.

Hast thou not, O Lord God Almighty, hast thou not transacted thy divine and important affairs among men by thy Son *Jesus Christ*, and by thy *Holy Spirit* ? And hast thou not ordained that men should transact their highest and most momentous concerns with thee, by thy Son and by thy Spirit ? Hast thou not, by the mouth of thy Son *Jesus*, required all that profess his religion to be washed with water in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost ? Is it not my duty then, to enquire, who or what are these sacred names, and what they signify ? Must I not *know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ thy Son, whom thou hast sent*, that I may fulfil all my respective duties towards thyself and thy Son, in hope of eternal life ? Hath not thy Son himself appealed to thee in his last prayer, that eternal life depends upon his knowledge ? And since thou hast made so much use of thy *Holy Spirit* in our religion, must I not

have some knowledge of this thy Spirit also, that I may pay thee all those honours thou requirest from this divine revelation ?

Hast thou not ascribed divine names and titles, and characters to thy Son and thy Holy Spirit in thy word, as well as assumed them to thyself ? And hast thou not appointed to them such glorious offices as cannot be executed without something of Divinity or true Godhead in them ? And yet art not thou, and thou alone, the true God ? How shall a poor weak creature be able to adjust and reconcile these clashing ideas, and to understand this mystery ? or must I believe and act blindfold, without understanding ?

Holy Father, thou knowest, how firmly I believe, and with my soul, whatsoever thou hast plainly written and revealed in thy word. I believe *Thee* to be *the only true God*, the Supreme of Beings, self-sufficient for thine own existence, and for all thy infinite affairs and transactions among creatures. I believe *thy Son Jesus Christ* to be all sufficient for the glorious work of mediation between God and man, which thou hast appointed him. I believe he is a man *in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. I believe *he is one with God* ; he is *God manifested in the flesh* ; and that the man *Jesus* is so closely and inseparably united with the true and eternal Godhead, as to become one person, even as the human soul and body make one man. I believe that this illustrious person is hereby possessed of divine dignity, sufficient to make full atonement for the sins of men by his sufferings and death, even though sin be accounted an infinite evil ; and that he hath all-sufficient power to raise himself from the dead, to ascend to heaven, and fulfil the blessed works for which thou hast exalted him, and to govern and judge the world in thine appointed time.

I believe also thy *blessed Spirit* hath almighty power and influence to do all thy will, to instruct men effectually in divine truths, to change the hearts of



fallen mankind from sin to holiness, to carry on thy work of illumination, sanctification, and consolation on the souls of all thy children, and to bring them safe to the heavenly world. I yield myself up joyfully and thankfully to this method of thy salvation, as it is revealed in thy gospel. But I acknowledge my darkness still. I want to have this wonderful doctrine of the all-sufficiency of thy *Son* and thy *Spirit*, for these divine works made a little plainer. May not thy humble creature be permitted to know what share they can have in thy Deity? Is it a vain and sinful curiosity to desire to have this article set in such a light, as may not diminish the eternal glory of the Unity of the true God, nor of the Supremacy of thee the Father of all?

Hadst thou informed me, gracious Father, in any place of thy word, that this divine doctrine is not to be understood by men, and yet they were required to believe it, I would have subdued all my curiosity to faith, and submitted my wandering and doubtful imaginations, as far as it was possible, to the holy and wise determinations of thy word. But I cannot find thou hast any where forbid me to understand it, or to make these enquiries. My conscience is the best natural light thou hast put within me, and since thou hast given me the Scriptures, my own conscience bids me *search the Scriptures*, to find out truth and *eternal life*. It bids me *try all things and hold fast that which is good*. And thy word, by the same expressions, encourages this holy practice. I have, therefore, been long searching into this divine doctrine, that I may pay thee due honour with understanding. Surely I ought to know the God whom I worship, whether he be one pure and simple Being, or whether thou art a three-fold Deity, consisting of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any one plain Scripture, to have informed me which of the different opinions, about the holy *Trinity*,

among the contending parties of Christians, had been true, thou knowest with how much zeal, satisfaction and joy, my unbiassed heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me plainly, in any single text, that *the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are three real distinct persons in thy divine nature*, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed with so many strong fears of assenting to the meer inventions of men, instead of divine doctrine; but I should have humbly and immediately accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them as the only rule of my faith. Or hadst thou been pleased so to express and include this proposition in the several scattered parts of thy book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out and with certainty infer this doctrine, I should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference, and ingrafted it into my soul.

Thou hast taught me, Holy Father, by thy prophets, that the *way of holiness*, in the times of the gospel, or under the kingdom of the *Messiah*, shall be a *highway*, a plain and easy path; so that the *way-faring man*, or the stranger, though a fool, shall not err therein. And thou hast called the poor and the ignorant, the *mean* and the *foolish things of this world*, to the knowledge of thyself and thy Son, and taught them to receive and partake of the salvation which thou hast provided. But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange, so difficult and so abstruse a doctrine as this; in the explication and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtilties of dispute and endless mazes of darkness? And can this strange and perplexing notion of three real persons going to make up one true God, be so necessary and so important a part of that Christian doctrine, which, in the Old Testament and the New,

is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understandings?

O thou searcher of hearts, who knowest all things, I appeal to thee concerning the sincerity of my enquiries into these discoveries of thy word. *Thou knowest me, thou hast seen me, and hast tried my heart towards thee* : if there be any lurking hypocrisy in my heart, any secret bias towards any thing but truth, uncover it, O Father of Lights, and banish it from my soul for ever. If thine eye discovers the least spark of criminal prejudice in any corner of my soul, extinguish it utterly, that I may not be led astray from the truth, in matters of such importance, by the least glance of error or mistake.

Thou art witness, O my God, with what diligence, with what constancy and care, I have read and searched thy holy word ; how early and late, by night and by day, I have been making these enquiries. How fervently have I been seeking thee on my bended knees, and directing my humble addresses to thee, to enlighten my darkness, and to shew me the meaning of thy word, that I may learn what I must believe, and what I must practise with regard to this doctrine, in order to please thee and obtain eternal life !

Great God, who seest all things, thou hast beheld what busy temptations have been often fluttering about my heart, to call it off from these laborious and difficult enquiries, and to give up thy word and thy gospel as an unintelligible book, and betake myself to the light of nature and reason : but thou hast been pleased by thy divine power to scatter these temptations, and fix my heart and my hope again upon that Saviour and that eternal life, which thou hast revealed in thy word, and proposed therein, to our knowledge and our acceptance. Blessed be the name of my God, that has not suffered me to abandon the gospel of his Son *Jesus* ! And blessed be that Holy Spirit that has kept me attentive to the truth delivered in thy gospel, and inclined me to wait longer in my search of



these divine truths, under the hope of thy gracious illumination.

I humbly call thee to witness, O my God, what a holy jealousy I ever wear about my heart, lest I should do the slightest dishonour to thy Supreme Majesty, in any of my enquiries or determinations. Thou seest what a religious fear, and what a tender solicitude I maintain on my soul, lest I should think or speak any thing to diminish the grandeurs and honours of thy Son *Jesus*, my dear Mediator, to whom I owe my everlasting hopes. Thou knowest how much afraid I am of speaking one word, which may be construed into a neglect of thy blessed Spirit, from whom I hope I am daily receiving happy influences of light and strength. Guard all the motions of my mind, O Almighty God, against every thing that borders upon these dangers. Forbid my thoughts to indulge, and forbid my pen to write one word, that should sink those grand ideas which belong to thyself or thy Son, or thy Holy Spirit. Forbid it, O my God, that ever I should be so unhappy as to unglorify my Father, my Saviour, or my Sanctifier, in any of my sentiments or expressions concerning them.

Blessed and faithful God, hast thou not promised that "the meek thou wilt guide in Judgment, the meek thou wilt teach the way?" Hast thou not told us by *Isaiah* thy prophet, "that thou wilt bring the blind by a way which they knew not, and wilt lead them in paths which they have not known?" Hast thou not informed us, by thy prophet *Hosea*, that "if we follow on to know the Lord, then we shall know him?" Hath not thy Son, our Saviour, assured us, that our heavenly "Father will give his Holy Spirit to them who ask him?" And is he not appointed to *guide us into all truth*? Have I not sought the gracious guidance of thy good Spirit continually? Am I not truly sensible of my own darkness and weakness, my dangerous prejudices on every side, and my utter insufficiency for my own conduct? Wilt thou leave



such a poor creature bewildered among a thousand perplexities, which are raised by the various opinions and contrivances of men to explain thy divine truth?

Help me, heavenly Father, for I am quite tired and weary of these human explainings, so various and uncertain. When wilt thou explain it to me thyself, O my God, by the secret and certain dictates of thy Spirit, according to the intimations of thy word? Nor let any pride of reason, nor any affectation of novelty, nor any criminal bias whatsoever, turn my heart aside from hearkening to these divine dictates of thy word and thy Spirit. Suffer not any of my native corruptions, nor the vanity of my imagination, to cast a mist over my eyes, while I am searching after the knowledge of thy mind and will, for my eternal salvation.

I intreat, O most merciful Father, that thou wilt not suffer the remnant of my short life to be wasted in endless wanderings, in quest of thee, and thy Son *Jesus*, as a great part of my past days have been; but let my sincere endeavours to know thee, in all the ways whereby thou hast discovered thyself in thy word, be crowned with such success, that my soul being established in every needful truth by thy Holy Spirit, I may spend my remaining life according to the rules of thy gospel; and may, with all the holy and happy creation, ascribe "glory and honour, wisdom and power to thee, who sittest upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

## THE PREFACE.

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'TIS generally allowed by all *Christians*, that some knowledge of the doctrine of the *blessed Trinity* is needful to our salvation by Jesus Christ ; but the only common ways for the people to be acquainted with it, in these our nations, are by hearing the *Athanasian Creed* read at church, or the learning of the sixth answer of the *Dissenters' Catechism* ; since the articles of the Church of England, which are entirely of the same sense, are but little known among the people.

The chief sentences of the *Athanasian Creed*, which briefly contain this knowledge are these ; “ We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. There is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one ; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God ; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.”

The sixth answer in the *Assembly's Catechism* is this ; “ There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one God, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory.”

Now there have been many pious souls, I suppose, among the *Dissenters*, as well as in the Church of England, when they began to enquire seriously after the truths of religion, and have learnt to believe and profess the doctrine of *Christ*, who are yet at a loss how to range this doctrine of the *Trinity* aright in their thoughts, and what honours to pay to this Sacred

Three, and to transact the affairs of their own salvation with them in the most regular manner.

They believe *God the Father* is supreme over all, of absolute perfection, all-sufficient for every thing that a creature can want or desire here or hereafter.

They believe *the Son of God, Jesus Christ*, to be made a proper sacrifice of atonement for the sins of men, and that his death had virtue and dignity enough in it to take away the sins of the world ; they believe that he is risen from the dead, that he has the government of the world put into his hands, and will raise up the dead, and judge all men at the last day.

They believe also, that the *Holy Ghost* was sent to bear witness to the gospel of *Christ*, by many miracles at first ; and is still sent to convince men of sin, to enlighten them in the knowledge of *Christ*, to change their hearts, and bring them safe through the dangers of this world to heaven.

Now these actions and these offices of each, require something of *true Godhead* to fulfil them ; but how any share or interest in the Godhead can belong to all the three, they cannot well conceive, since they are assured often in Scripture, *there is but one God* : and our Saviour says expressly, John xvii. 3, “ This is life eternal, *O Father*, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” And 1 Cor. viii. 4. 6, “ There is none other God but one : to us there is but one God, even the Father, of whom are all things,” &c.

Here permit me to borrow a parallel from the case of a sick person and a medicine, and apply it to the present subject. There are several even wise and cautious persons, who may have been long troubled with some common and painful malady ; if they happen to know a plain honest neighbour, that has felt the very same disease, and been healed by some medicine which is plain and simple, which yet will stand the test of a thousand censures ; they will choose to



consult this honest neighbour, rather than apply to a whole college of learned physicians ; because they are afraid they shall be led by them into a maze of prescriptions and medicines, almost endless, and perhaps without success. Now it is such kind of *patients* I invite to be my readers, or rather such kind of *Christians*, for whom this book is written ; not for the learned and talking disputants of the age, but for such as feel their daily difficulties, and would fain be led by the safe experience of a friend, under the plain directions of Scripture, into the way of relief.

The author professes himself a *Christian*, but hath been exercised with long and grievous doubts, and distress of spirit, in this article of the *blessed Trinity* : he hath laboured long in vain to range aright, in his thoughts, the peculiar characters, properties, relations and offices of the Sacred Three, and to transact the affairs of his salvation with them, according to Scripture. He hath been perplexed with a multitude of creeds and counsellors ; he hath read whatsoever could come within his reach and understanding to obtain relief, and found himself still embarrassed and bewildered, till he was led into this scheme of doctrine ; and by confining himself to enquiries only in the word of God, he finds his conscience pretty well established in the duties and comforts of the Christian life.

The author does not pretend to explain every Scripture fully by this scheme ; nor to answer every difficult question : he hopes, if the *Second Part* be encouraged to appear, that will have a great tendency towards it. But he feels himself, through the grace of God, able to live and die upon his transactions with the blessed God, according to this doctrine, in humble expectation of eternal life. And if the reader will consult nothing but the word of God, as the noble *Bereans* did, while he is searching into this scheme, to find *if things are so*, and that with fervent prayers for divine instruction, the writer sincerely wishes and hopes he will meet with the same success.



A FAITHFUL ENQUIRY  
AFTER THE ANCIENT AND ORIGINAL DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
**TRINITY,**

TAUGHT by CHRIST and his APOSTLES.

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SECT. I. *The Doctrine of the Trinity proved to be a plain and easy Doctrine.*

THE knowledge of the sacred doctrine of the *Trinity* may be considered in two respects.

*First*, So far as may be sufficient to fulfil the various duties of the *Christian* life, and to obtain the salvation of *Christ*.

*Secondly*, So far as it may be drawn from the Holy Scriptures, with the exercise of our best judgments upon them, and may be usefully and honourably pursued in order to give more advanced and enquiring Christians a clearer and more complete idea of that God whom they worship, that Lord *Jesus Christ*, in whom they trust as a Mediator to reconcile them to God, and of that blessed *Spirit* who is the author of those gifts and graces, whereby they are trained up and fitted for heaven.

The *first* of these is sufficient for all true *Christians*: the *last* is only for those who seek after higher degrees of knowledge to glorify God and *Christ* the more, and

particularly for those persons who are set to defend the gospel against all its enemies and opposers.

'Tis the *first* of these that I shall now endeavour to describe, (*viz.*) *that knowledge of the Holy Trinity which may be sufficient for the salvation of every Christian.*

And here I must lay down this *caution*, (*viz.*) that I am by no means endeavouring to shew, that all this knowledge is so necessary to true Christianity, or that a man cannot be a true Christian, nor be saved, without the knowledge of all these propositions or articles. God forbid that I should take upon me, without plain Scripture, to pronounce all these to be necessary articles of the Christian Religion, and to determine against the salvation of those who know them not, or who refuse to receive them. Perhaps many poor creatures may be saved, who have no express and distinct idea of half of them.

But for that knowledge of the blessed Trinity, which is sufficient for salvation, I think there are these *six* qualifications that must belong to it, agreeably to the intimations of Scripture.

1. It must be such a knowledge of this doctrine as *allows a sufficient foundation for all the necessary and most important articles of the Christian Faith, that relate to the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.*

It must therefore be such a knowledge of the constitution, glory and dignity of the person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, as lays sufficient ground for his becoming a complete Mediator betwixt God and man; such as ascribes to his person such a dignity as makes his obedience and his sufferings a proper propitiation for the guilt and iniquities of men, and renders his death a sufficient ransom for those who are condemned by the law of God: it must ascribe also such power and authority to him, as to be able to raise his church out of this sinful world, to govern and protect it, and bring it safe to glory, as well as to raise the dead, and to govern and to judge the world.

This knowledge of the *Holy Spirit* must allow him also to be sufficient to enlighten the dark minds of men with divine truths, to change their natures, to turn their wills from sin to holiness, and secure them to enter into the heavenly world. Now I confess, I cannot see how these powers and glories can be attributed to *Christ* or to the *Holy Spirit*, without ascribing proper Deity to them some way or other: but every one must judge for himself upon a just survey of Scripture.

2. Such knowledge of this doctrine must be *plain and easy* to obtain and to remember, because it is of great and universal use and importance in our religion to every one who professes it, and 'tis necessary in learning the way of salvation, as well as in the constant practice of it: every true *Christian*, therefore, must have some knowledge of it, for he is baptized or entered into the profession of *Christianity* by these three names. And since there are in the world many weak true Christians, some who are young in years, and some of very low capacities, since many are bred up merely to the meanest offices of life, ploughmen, milkmaids and labourers in the mines, who have scarcely any advantages for knowledge or improvement of the mind, since these are some of the "base and foolish things of this world," which "God hath chosen and called," as in 1 Cor. i. 27; it is certain that the necessary part of this doctrine cannot have any great depths or intricate notions in it, nor can it include any refinements of science, or obscure terms of art as necessary to understand, conceive, or explain it; because every one who would be saved in the *Christian* way must know it in some measure; even the babes may learn it, and the *way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein.* Isa. xxxv. 8.

This sufficient knowledge for the same reason must not contain a multitude and variety of particulars in it, lest the thoughts be entangled and perplexed, and confounded amongst them; for it must be observed,



that some religious persons have but a narrow view of things and a very short memory, and yet these must be acquainted with this doctrine, and receive it and live upon it in their daily walking with God, according to the gospel.

3. *It must be a doctrine not only easy to be apprehended, but it must not be liable to many cavils ; because throughout the whole New Testament, and especially in the Acts of the Apostles, when heathens were first converted, and in their Epistles, where they were further instructed, and where we might most expect it, there is no contest, nor any controversy, among the primitive Christians about the Trinity as the apostles taught it ; no special labour taken by the holy writers to explain it ; no cautions nor directions given about the manner of conceiving it ; no errors or false doctrines about it refuted ; no learned words or subtil notions used either in the mention of it, or of our duty relating to it ; there are no hard questions asked of the apostles in their preaching or their writing on this subject, though it is sufficiently evident concerning other points of Christianity, that the primitive Christians ran into different opinions, doubts, questions, gross errors and various controversies, as the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Corinthians, sufficiently inform us.*

4. *It must be such a knowledge of this doctrine as is perfectly consistent with the notions and conceptions that the wisest of the heathens had gotten by the light of nature concerning the one true God, and with the ideas which the Jews had learnt of the same true God, both from reason and Scripture.*

The reason is plain, because neither CHRIST nor his apostles in their ministrations gave the least hint to the Jews, or the wise and learned Gentiles, that they must change their old sentiments, *i. e.* their natural and rational ideas concerning the one true God : and the Scripture allows these best of the *heathens*, that they *knew the true God*, “ even the invisible things that



relate to him, (viz.) his eternal power and Godhead by the creation of the world," Rom. i. 20, 21.

The idolatrous Gentiles indeed are excepted, and a better notion of God is given to them by St. Paul, in several places; even the same which the wisest Gentiles and the Jews had before obtained, (viz.) That God is an intelligent Being or Spirit, who knows all things, who made all things, and who can do all things; that he is but one only Spirit, and not more. But it would have been a huge prejudice and stumbling-block both to the Jews and to the Gentiles against receiving the Christian Religion, if they had heard this doctrine belonged to it, (viz.) *That the true God was made up of or consisted of three distinct real personal agents, (viz.) the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: and as the apostles never said any thing to them of this kind, so neither was this necessary in order to teach them the true doctrine of the Trinity: they let them into this doctrine by degrees, as it opened itself further in their learning the Christian Religion.*

5. *It must be such a knowledge as may shew us in some sufficient measure what every one of the Sacred Three hath done, and what he doth for us and towards our salvation; and to inform us what are those respects and honours which we are bound to pay to each of the Sacred Three according to the New Testament.* For since the Christian Religion is a religion that will never save any man by the mere knowledge and profession of it without the practice, therefore the practical parts of our religion, which depend upon this doctrine, must be made very plain to us, so that both young and old, even of the lowest capacity, who have been taught, may be reasonably supposed to understand and to remember it.

6. *It must be such a doctrine as is obvious in Scripture and evidently contained there; if not in the most express words, yet so plainly appearing to common readers, as not to want long trains of reasoning and*

distant inferences to draw it out of Scripture ; because there are many Christians who are so poorly skilled in the art of reasoning, that they would not be able to find it, unless it lie as it were open and near the surface.

Yet this *caution* may be added in the last place, that every plain Christian must not expect to find such a knowledge of it as is sufficient to answer all objections and cavils about it, nor to explain every verse of Scripture which relates to it. To do this, perhaps, may be beyond the skill even of the ablest divines in this present state of darkness and imperfection.

Let us now begin to represent this doctrine of the *Trinity, or of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, so far as is sufficient for salvation* : and let us take heed all the way to admit no notions or opinions which carry in them such distant, difficult, and perplexed ideas as are here excluded by these rules.

## SECT. II. *Of the One True God.*

IN all our conceptions of God, or of the divine nature, this must be laid down as a solid and unmoveable foundation, that *there is and there can be but one true God*, One supreme, almighty, and eternal Being or Spirit, who is oftentimes called *God the Father* in Scripture, as the first of Beings and the prime Agent in all things. In this sense many of the *heathens* have called him the *Father of all* : and yet he is in a more peculiar manner the Father of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*.

'Tis our truest notion or conception of God, that he is a *Spirit*, that is, an invisible and thinking Being, most perfect in all his properties, a Being who has an universal understanding and a most powerful will, who knows every thing, who has made all things, and who can do whatsoever he pleases. This

is the notion or idea which the light of nature or right reason would give to all mankind concerning the one true God, and this is the notion which Scripture gives us both in the Old Testament and in the New.

Nor doth Scripture give us any intimation, that we must forsake or change this natural notion of the true God, as one Eternal, All-wise and Almighty Spirit, which the more rational *Heathens* have obtained by the light of nature, and the *Jews* by Scripture, in order to become *Christians* or believers in *Christ Jesus*. This idea or conception of *God the Father*, is in all ages the same, and in all true religions. Our blessed Saviour tells us, John iv. 24, *God is a Spirit*; whom in the foregoing verse he twice calls the *Father*; and *Moses* and *Christ* both assure us, *the Lord our God is one Lord*. Deut. vi. 4. Mark xii. 29.

SECT. III. *Of the Holy Trinity, or the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in general; and whether they be Three proper Persons.*

THE doctrine of the blessed Trinity, or of the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*, in its last and most complete representation, together with their peculiar characters and offices, is a special doctrine of the *Christian Religion*. It must be acknowledged, indeed, that the *doctrine of the Father*, and the *Holy Spirit*, was known to the *Jews* by the Old Testament. Yet the explicit discovery of *Jesus Christ* or the *Messiah*, considered as the *Son of God*, was but seldom and more obscurely made known of old by the *Jewish* writers; as particularly in the 2d, and in the 89th *Psalm*.

The Sacred Three in the Trinity are plainly represented in Scripture, and have generally been represented by *Christian* writers like *three persons*, or three distinct personal agents, as acting different parts, and sustaining different characters in the affairs of our



salvation ; and yet it seems to be abundantly evident also in Scripture, that they are all three represented in several places, as *having true and proper Deity* some way belonging to them ; and that the names, titles, attributes and operations of Godhead, are ascribed to all the Three, in the Old Testament and in the New.

This is the substance of the doctrine itself, as revealed in the Bible ; and it has been generally agreed upon by almost all Christians for many ages, and the writers on the Trinity have so often proved it, that I need not repeat the proofs here.

Yet there are still sufficient guards in the New Testament, that this ancient doctrine of the eternal *Unity of God* must have no inroad made upon it by *Christianity*. Our Saviour himself, just before he left the world, speaking to God his Father, informs us, John xvii. 3, " This is life eternal to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And *St. Paul* the great apostle, though he preaches up our Lord *Jesus Christ* and the blessed *Spirit* abundantly in all their offices and operations, yet he tries to establish the *Corinthians* in this ancient truth still, 1 Cor. i. 8, " Though there be who are called Gods, whether in heaven or earth, (as there are Gods many and Lords many) but to us there is but one God, *even* the Father, of whom are all things ; and one Lord, *even* Jesus Christ, by whom are all things," &c. Now there is nothing in *Christianity* or the New Testament, which requires us to strain these words of Scripture to any other sense, nor to introduce such limitations upon this general doctrine, as might give occasion for any suspicion, that we are renouncing the *Unity of God*, though Christians are required to maintain the great doctrine of the *Trinity*, *i. e.* the Father, Son, and Spirit, with all their respective divine characters and offices.

Those writers who call the Sacred Three by the name of *three persons* do not assert or maintain that

this very word or expression of *three persons* is found in Scripture, nor is the word *person* expressly applied to them all three.

And though in our translation the word *person* be ascribed both to the *Father* and the *Son*, who (as we find in Scripture) are proper persons, yet none pretend that this word is so expressly applied to the *Holy Spirit*, though he be represented often in a personal manner.

Now this word *person* having been a great bone of contention in the churches, both in ancient and later times, and not agreed upon by all Christians to this day, \* I shall by no means think it necessary to use that word which may be so offensive to some very good Christians.

\* There are some learned writers and some confessions of faith among ancient and later Christians, which do not insist on the word *person*: and some, though they do use this word, yet represent the *Son* or second person as the *Reason* and *Wisdom* of God, and the *Spirit* as the *Power* of God, and therefore cannot by this word *Reason*, mean a real proper person, in the full and common sense of it. Now these confessors should not be cut off from *Christianity*, though in their idea the second and third persons are but metaphorically so, or only in the Scriptural way of representing things *personally*, which are not *proper persons*.

And indeed the word *person* in some of these confessions and in the writings of some of the ancient fathers, as well as our modern divines, seems to be only a name to signify some middle thing, between a *substance* and a *power* or *property*. A *substance* is what it properly signifies in the Greek word *ὕλη*. But between *substance* and a *power* or *property*, there is no middle thing which has any idea belonging to it, that I know of: and yet many of the fathers seem to make the *Son* as well as the *Spirit* sometimes a distinct substance, and sometimes a property or power in the Deity.

And this is certain further, that our most orthodox divines, though they sometimes call them *proper and real persons*, yet they do not pretend to use the word *person*, in this scriptural doctrine of the Trinity, in the very same intire and complete sense as when we say, *Peter, Paul and John*, are three persons. A distinct person, in the full and proper sense of the word among men, must be a distinct spirit; for a distinct person requires at least another distinct consciousness, with another distinct will, which seems to infer another different spirit. And surely the Deity is not made up of three such distinct and different spirits.

Besides, it is sufficiently evident, that in the language of Scripture, and in the writings of the *Jewish* nation, those things which are not strictly and properly *persons*, are often represented in a personal manner, as *Wisdom*, Prov. ix. 1. *The Law*, Gal. iv. 21. *The Scriptures*, Gal. iii. 8. *Righteousness*, Rom. x. 6. *Love or Charity*, 1 Cor. xiii. And therefore the *Sacred Three* may be called three persons, or at least *Three Scriptural Persons*, I hope, without offence, and without entering into the tedious, learned and philosophical difficulties about the word *person*: and without enquiring or determining whether they be three real proper persons, or no; which has created infinite disputes, and which cannot be understood, much less decided, by private Christians.

Now let us try to represent this scriptural doctrine, how *Three who are spoken of in Scripture language as distinct personal Agents, can each of them be true God*, or have the true Godhead ascribed to them. And let us remember to represent it in such a manner, as that all true Christians may arrive at some knowledge of it, without perplexing difficulties.

The *first thing* that must be determined and laid down as a certain foundation of all our sentiments on this subject, is this; that if the *Son of God* and the *Holy Spirit* have true Godhead belonging to them, as well as the *Father*, then since there is but one true



eternal God, it follows, that one and the same true Godhead which is in the *Father*, is the very Godhead that belongs to *Jesus Christ*, the *Son*, and to the *Holy Ghost*; almost all Trinitarians agree in this opinion as a necessary truth.

Now there are but two ways men have found out, or that I can possibly conceive, how this can be represented, but by supposing that *the same one true Godhead is in three persons*, or by supposing that *three persons are in the same one true Godhead*.

The last of these suppositions has been the most common, and I was brought up in the belief of it, as though it had been all scriptural, (*viz.*) *that three persons are in one Godhead*; but upon mature search, I do not find this any where expressed in Scripture, nor any thing from which it can be certainly inferred. 'Tis granted, indeed, that this has been the most common opinion, since it was thus settled about the time of the *Arian Controversy*, in the 3d and 4th century; but one current and general notion of it was not settled before. Yet as we have the same Scriptures which they had, why may not we at 1700 years' distance understand and interpret them as well as they at 300 years' distance from Christ and his apostles, when all the traditional knowledge of this matter was lost? The difficulties which stand in the way of this second supposition are many and great, as will be shewn in another place.

And 'tis certain the first supposition may be made to appear to every reader much more plain and easy to be understood, (*viz.*) *that the same one Godhead is in three persons*; the *Father* is a proper person with a distinct conscious mind and will; the *Son* is also a proper person with a distinct conscious mind and will; and the *Holy Spirit* is at least a scriptural person; and the same Godhead is in all these three. And this does more exactly and evidently answer most of the expressions of Scripture, and most effectually secures the grand designs of the sacred doctrine of the

Trinity, with regard to the several parts of our salvation, as will be evident by what follows.

#### SECT. IV. *Of God the Father.*

IF we speak concerning the *Father*, we must allow, with universal reason, both from Scripture and from the nature of things, that *God the Father* is a true and proper person,\* a distinct intelligent Being, infinitely distinct from all creatures, with a distinct understanding and a distinct will, as all proper persons have; and it is very plain, that the full and complete Godhead is in this first person, who is usually called *God* and sometimes the *Father*. There is no difficulty nor obstacle in the way to determine this, concerning the first sacred person of the three, who is in every respect divine and superior to all that is not God; and true Godhead is in him originally and eternally; and to know this concerning God the Father, is sufficient knowledge of him for our salvation.

#### SECT. V. *Of JESUS CHRIST the Son of God.*

IF we enquire concerning the *Son of God*, who is usually called the *second person*, we know abundantly from Scripture that he is the *man Christ Jesus*; who is also frequently called the *Son of God* in the New Testament. "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. ii. 5. Now there is not one text which I know of in

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\* Not that I design to prove this by Heb. i. 3, where Christ is called the *character* or *express image* of the Father's person, because *ὑπόστασις* there may be as well translated *substance*, as it more naturally signifies.

all the Bible, wherein he is called the *Son*, only and purely relating to his Godhead, but all refer rather to his inferior nature, or his office ; for Godhead cannot be generated or derived.

There are several reasons, indeed, why he may be called the *Son of God* ; *first*, because of the analogy or resemblance which Scripture frequently makes use of between things divine and human. The *Son* amongst men is another distinct person, who is derived from the Father, and usually bears the nearest natural resemblance of the Father ; so *Jesus Christ*, the *Son of God*, is another distinct person, who is derived from God his Father, and bears his nearest resemblance. He is called "the express image of his person." Heb. i. 3.

He is called also, *secondly*, the *Son of God* ; because he was raised from the dead by the power of God, and is called the "first begotten from the dead." Compare Psal. ii. 7, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," with Acts xiii. 33, 34, &c. where this verse is so explained, but not because of any eternal generation ; and Coloss. i. 18, where he is called the "first born from the dead." Persons raised from the dead are in Scripture called "Sons of God, being children of the resurrection." Luke xx. 36.

He is also sometimes called the *Son of God*, because of his *office* as Mediator, Acts viii. 37 ; when the Eunuch confessed this, he was baptized.

But the obvious reason why he is called the *Son of God* is most evident from Luke i. 35, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Thus spake the angel *Gabriel* to the *Virgin Mary*.

He was born as a man here on earth, he lived and died as a man ; having a human body with a rational soul, and in this view he was a being far inferior to the true and eternal God.



And though the body of *Christ* had no being then, yet it must be acknowledged, that there is some part of the constitution of the complete person of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, which existed through all ancient ages; for John xvii. 5, "He had glory with the Father before the foundation of the world." Ephes. iii. 9, "God the Father *created the world by Jesus Christ*;" and Coloss. i. 16, "By him all things were created," *i. e.* as the supreme, distinct agent under God the Father.

He had an existence therefore early enough to create this world, and to enter into councils of peace with God the Father for the reconciliation of fallen man to God, before this world was founded, John xvii. 4, 5, Ephes. i. 4, Titus i. 2, God "hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." *Eternal life was promised in him before the world began.*

'Tis evident also, that he is often called God in Scripture, John i. 1, &c. and since he is true *God* as well as *man*, we have plain directions from Scripture to suppose that this second person, or this man *Christ Jesus*, has the true Godhead united to him, or dwelling in him, in a peculiar manner; *i. e.* the man *Jesus Christ* is assumed by the great God into so near and intimate an union with himself, that they are often represented as one complex person, or personal agent. The man *Jesus Christ* is the inferior agent or medium of the great God, who acteth whatsoever he pleases in and by the man *Jesus Christ*.

And it may properly be called a *personal union*, since many personal actions are attributed to these two Spirits, the human and the divine united. Sometimes it is said, "God created the world," sometimes *Jesus Christ* is represented as Creator of the world; sometimes "God created the world by *Jesus Christ*." In some places it is said, that *God redeemed the church by his own blood*, Acts xx. 28. In others it appears the church was redeemed by *Jesus Christ*. Here is

such an union of these two agents, that their actions are ascribed often as to one person.

To this personal union it must be attributed that "the man Jesus Christ," who is "the one Mediator between God and man," 1 Tim. ii. 5, is said *to have all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him*, Coloss. ii. 9. He is called "God manifest in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. He is of the race of the Jews concerning the flesh; and he is also "God over all blessed for ever;" Rom. ix. 5. With many other Scriptures which represent the divine nature dwelling in him, and that he is constituted a Mediator, with a human and a divine nature.

And therefore in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, he is called both God and Man, Isai. ix. 6, "a child born, a son given;" and yet he is there called "the mighty God;" and Jer. xxiii. 6, "The Lord our righteousness;" and "Emmanuel," or "God with us." Matt. i. 23, Isai. vii. 14, &c.

Now if this account of *Jesus Christ*, as personally united to God, and as *one with God*, be sufficient to answer all the *benefits* that we are taught to hope from him, and all the *duties* which we are required to perform toward him, then surely we may suppose it sufficient for salvation.

The *benefits* which we are to receive from *Jesus Christ*, are pardon of sin through his full atonement or satisfaction, for which the dignity of his person is sufficient, as he is one with God. The dignity of this union spreads itself over all that *Christ* did and suffered, and makes it divine and all-sufficient. This union enables him also to raise his church out of this world, to change the hearts of men, and turn them to himself; to give his presence to his people in their worship, to preserve his church from all their enemies, to rule and govern the nations, to raise the dead, and to judge the world. As he is one with God, "he is head over all things to the church," Ephes. i. last; and is capable of all these works.

The *duties* which we are required to perform to him (at least such as we have examples of the performance of them) are to "honour him as we honour the Father," John v. 23. To trust him, John xiv. 1, "Ye trust in God, trust also in me." To obey him, Heb. v. 9, "He became the author of Salvation to all that obey him." To pray to him, as dying Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," Acts vii 59. Or as Paul "besought the Lord thrice," 2 Cor. xii. 8. To give praises to him, and Doxologies, as St. Paul does often, and as the whole creation does, Rev. v. 12, 13, "Every creature which is in heaven and earth, &c. said, blessing and honour and glory and power be to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." And to *wait for his second coming*, 2 Tim. iv. 8. 1 Thess i. 10. Heb. ix. 28.

It is granted, there may be several texts of Scripture relating to *Christ*, which a young Christian, with this small knowledge, may not be able to explain; yet if he fulfils all the required duties to him, and trusts in him for all his benefits, he may be well assured this person shall not miss of his salvation, though he cannot interpret all Scripture.

#### SECT. VI. *Of the Holy Spirit.*

THOUGH the *Messiah* was not much made known to the *Jews* under the title of the *Son of God*, yet the *Spirit of God* is often spoken of in the Old Testament, and must be in some measure known to them even from the beginning.

He was known to the people of God through all the ages of the Old Testament, in the days of *Noah*, Gen. vi, 3; of *Job*, Job xxvi. 13; of *Moses*, Numb. xi. 17, 29; of *Joshua*, of the *Judges*, *Saul*, *David*, and the rest of the *Kings*, together with the *Prophets*, before the Captivity, in the Captivity, and after the Captivity. And therefore through these several ages



they must have some general notion or idea of what they meant by the *Spirit of God*, when they read or spoke of him.

Now the best idea that we can find, which either the ancient or modern *Jews* have received concerning the *Spirit of God*, is that of a *real, almighty, operative power or principle of knowledge or action in the true Godhead*; for I do not find they ever agreed to carry their ideas so far as to make him a real, distinct person in the Deity.\*

Now we can hardly doubt but that the general notion of the *Spirit of God*, or *Holy Spirit*, when *Christ* first came on earth, and which inspired *Zechariah* and *Elizabeth*, *Mary* the mother of *Christ*, *Simeon* and *Anna*, and *John the Baptist*, Luke 1st. and 2nd. chap. in the beginning of the New Testament, was the same notion or idea of the *Spirit*, which the *Jews* had received from all ages by their Scriptures, and from their fathers by education and tradition.

And 'tis most highly reasonable to believe, that our blessed Lord, who is *truth* itself, used those words of the Old Testament in the same sense in which the *Jews* of that day used them without reproof or blame; and that he would not impose upon them, nor on his disciples, by putting new and unknown ideas upon common and well-known words, or names, in their conversation with him.

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\* The learned Dr. *Allix* has taken much pains in his book of the *Judgments of the ancient Jews*, &c. to prove that the *Son* and *Spirit* were counted distinct persons by the ancient *Jews*; and though he does prove it by several of their writings in some measure concerning the *Son*, whom they sometimes suppose to be an *angel* or a *man*, as well as in other places a power in the Godhead; yet he makes nothing of this evident concerning the *Spirit*. It is plain enough, they thought him only a power or principle of operation in God, or the mind, or will, or influence of God.

In order to find what is the true scriptural idea of the *Holy Spirit*, let it be added also, that as the Scripture makes use of the analogy or resemblance between human and divine things, to represent the *Son of God* to us, so does it also in representing the *Spirit of God*.

Now the *spirit* of any thing amongst the *Jews*, and other *Eastern* nations, was the perceptive and active power or principle of that being. So the *spirit* of a man is the principle of knowledge and operation in man; so the *spirit* of a beast is the same; and the apostle *Paul* confirms this opinion, and establishes this analogy between things human and divine. 1 Cor. ii. 11, "What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

The *Spirit of God* therefore, according to this analogy, must be that all-wise, almighty, and eternal principle of consciousness and of powerful operation which is in the Godhead.

It is sometimes the principle of knowledge or consciousness, in Psal. cxxxix. 7, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

It is sometimes the principle of *almighty power and operation*. Job xxxiv. 4, "The Spirit of God has made me." Sometimes the principle of *affection*, as Isai. lxiii. 10, "They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit." Zec. vi. 8, "They have quieted my Spirit in the north country."

But let it be observed also, that the *influences* or *operations* of the Holy Spirit, his motions, his effects, the gifts and graces wrought by this spirit, are called by the same name, i. e. *the Spirit*, as John iii. 6, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

And doubtless this is the true sense of the word in many places of the gospels and the epistles. It means the *influence* or *power* of the Spirit. And even when *Christ* promises the *Spirit* to his disciples, John xv. 26, it

does not directly mean the eternal, essential principle of wisdom and power which is in God ; but rather that influence or virtue which is derived from God unto men. And therefore the *Holy Spirit* is not said to be *created* as other spirits, nor *begotten* as *Jesus Christ* the Son of God ; but it is said, “ the Spirit which proceedeth from the Father,” and in many other Scriptures, it must have the same meaning, *i. e.* a power or virtue derived from God.

I confess, this is the only sense which the Socinians allow to the *Holy Spirit* in Scripture ; but I think several places in the Bible lead us plainly to that essential power that is in God. So the *word of God* sometimes signifies the second person himself, the *Son of God*, and sometimes the *word* spoken or written.

This impersonal sense of the *Spirit of God* especially must have place where the Spirit is represented as divided into parts or portions. Num. xi. 25, “ The Lord took of the Spirit that was upon Moses, and gave it to the elders ;” *i. e.* part of the influences of the Spirit. 2 Kings ii. 9, “ Elisha had a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.” And particularly where the *Spirit* is said to be “ poured out or shed forth,” Isai. xlv. 3. Where persons are said to be baptized, or filled, or anointed with the Spirit, &c. And the Spirit is called the anointing, 1 John ii. 20, 27.

It may be intimated here also, that the *Holy Spirit* in the New Testament, when it speaks of things after the Ascension of *Christ*, very generally or for the most part means, that power or influence of the eternal Spirit of God, which *proceedeth from the Father*, and which was communicated, or to be communicated by *Christ*, when he was exalted, to his followers here on earth, to confirm his gospel, and to call in and secure his subjects : or it may be described thus ; *That divine influence which was eminently given to Christ at his ascent to heaven, to attend his gospel and bear witness to it by miracles in the first age, and by sanctifying grace and comfort ever since.* 'Tis very useful to bear



this idea always in mind in reading the New Testament.

And indeed if the *Holy Spirit* were really a true and proper person, it would be as difficult to account for all these and many more expressions in Scripture, which cannot possibly be ascribed to a proper person; and if in some places these *impersonal expressions*, or in other places the *personal expressions*, must be figurative, why may not my explication of them do as well as the contrary? And thus the *Spirit of God* need not any where be construed into a real proper distinct person.

And certainly this is and will be a perpetual difficulty on all those opinions, which suppose the *Spirit of God* to be a real proper person, either created or uncreated, (*viz.*) that a person should be *poured down* on men, should be *shed down*, or *should fall* on men, should be given with or *without measure*; that men should be *baptized* with a person, should be *anointed* with a person, should be *sealed* with a person, should be *full* of a person, or *filled* with a person, &c.

We are never said to be *baptized with the Father*, or *the Son*, because they are proper persons, but only *baptized into their names*, or *into them*: but since the expression of *being baptized with the Holy Spirit* is usual, Matt. iii. 11, Acts i. 5, &c. it seems to shew us that the *Holy Spirit* here means some power, virtue, or influence, which is not a proper person.

Yet let it be remembered (as is said before) that even in some of these impersonal senses it may be sometimes represented as performing personal actions, according to the *Hebrew* idiom; as *Wisdom*, the *Law*, the *Scripture*, *Righteousness*, *Sin*, *Death*, and many other things are described as persons. So *the anointing teacheth us all things*, 1 John, ii. 27. "The Spirit lusteth against the flesh," Gal. v. 17. *i. e.* the new nature wrought by the Spirit.

Next, let us enquire what are the *benefits* which w

hope for from the *Spirit of God*, and what are the *duties* that we are required to perform towards him, and see whether the description already given of the *Spirit* be not sufficient to answer these purposes, and so to be sufficient for our Salvation.

As for the *benefits* we receive, it is the *Spirit of God* that *reveals* the things of God to us in his word. He *inspired* the prophets and apostles, 2 Pet. i. 21. He *convinceth* us of sin and of righteousness, John xvi. 8, 9, 10. He *enlightens* our minds in the knowledge of divine things. He *takes of the things of Christ* and *shews them to his people*, John xvi. 15. He *purifies* the heart, he *renews* or *regenerates* sinful man, and changes his nature into holiness, John iii. 5, 6. He gives *comfort*, *hope*, and *joy* in believing, Rom. v. 5, and xv. 13. And carries on the work of God in the saints till it be finished, Ephes. ii. 22.

The *duties* we are to fulfil towards him, are first to be *baptized in or into his name*, Matt. xxviii. 19. But most of the other *duties* are expressed *negatively* (viz.) not to *blaspheme* him, i. e. to attribute his divine works to an evil spirit. Not to *resist* him, not to *grieve* him, not to *quench* him, or his operations; but to "hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." And to obey all his sacred influences.

But I know not any place of Scripture \* which re-

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\* There are some texts wherein there are *devout wishes* of the holy writer for the persons to whom he writes, for grace, mercy and peace from *God the Father* and his *Son Jesus Christ*, and from the *seven Spirits* before the throne, which are supposed to mean the *Spirit of God*, Rev. i. 4, 5. So the *grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*, the *love of God*, and the *Communion of the Holy Spirit* be with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. But these are not direct addresses to any of the persons of the Trinity.

If any good Christians imagine that a short *apostrophe* to two of the *Winds* in a poetical Sonnet of Scripture,

quires us to make express personal addresses, either of prayer or of praise, unto the *Spirit*, as we are taught to do to the *Father* and to the *Son*; nor can I find where we are required to fear him or to adore him as God, or to trust in him, or so much as to follow after the knowledge of him; but for these benefits which we receive from him, we are directed by precepts or examples in Scripture to address or pray to the *Father* or the *Son*, Luke xi. 13, Rom. xv. 13. John xv. 26, but *not to the Spirit* himself.

Surely if *praises* or *prayers* were necessary to be offered distinctly to the *Holy Spirit*, 'tis very strange that of all the writers of the New Testament, not one of them should give us some hint of it in precept, instruction, or example; but neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, nor John, Paul, nor Peter, James, nor Jude, have left us any thing whence we can infer it.

'Tis true I cannot think it unlawful nor utterly improper upon some occasions to say, *Blessed Spirit of God, enlighten me in the knowledge of the truth: or we give thanks to thee, O Divine Spirit, for thy holy influences*; for since the *Holy Spirit* is true God, I think he may be adored; we may say, *Blessed be God and his Spirit*; as we may say, *Blessed be God and his wisdom, or his power, or his grace*. But I think the two plainest reasons why we are not directed to address express prayer or praise unto him, or perform divine honour to him directly, is *first*, because the greater part of Scriptures which speak of the Spirit of God mean his influences, his operations, &c. And these are not proper objects of such express addresses. And *secondly*, because

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*Cant.* iv. 16, can make a strong argument for an express address of worship to the *Holy Spirit*, I leave them to enjoy their own ideas, and to take all the satisfaction they can from these words, *Awake, O North wind, and come thou South, and blow upon my garden*.



whenever the *Father* or the *Son* is address, the *Holy Spirit*, who is the conscious and active power, or Spirit of God, is also worshipped, though not in an express and distinct manner.

It may be observed also, that though our Lord *Jesus Christ* is sometimes address by prayer in Scripture, because he is true God, yet 'tis but very seldom this is done, that so the general method of Christian worship may be maintained; that is, to make our direct addresses to *God the Father* by the mediation of *Jesus Christ his Son*, and by the aids of the *Holy Spirit*, Ephes. ii. 18.

#### SECT. VII. *Of the Spirit of God, as given to Jesus Christ.*

IN the New Testament our Lord *Jesus Christ* is represented to have the "Spirit given him without measure" John iii. 34, to be "full of the Spirit," "filled" or "anointed with the Spirit," and to be "led by the Spirit," Luke iv. 1. All this may be most easily accounted for by the intimate and personal union that is betwixt the true God and the man *Jesus Christ*; for *all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily*, Coloss. ii. 9.

Not that this all-sufficiency of the Godhead was to be used and employed by the mere sovereign will of the man *Jesus*, or at all times, but according to the will of God and the commission given to *Christ* by the Father, at different seasons and periods.

Here on earth the influences of wisdom and power, of the *Spirit of God* which were communicated to him, were sufficient for his divine purposes on earth; but at his ascent to heaven doubtless he was furnished with this fulness of the Godhead with further influences both for himself and for his church.

(1) *For himself*; for the Son of God who *knew* at the day of judgment on earth, Mark xiii. 32,

knew it well when he came to heaven, and took the book of divine decrees into his hand, and gave his servant John the revelations of future things in the several periods of the church to the end of the world, Rev. v. 7, and i. 1. And (2) *For his church*, for he sent his Spirit, *i. e.* his influences and gifts, and miraculous powers on his apostles, and by their hands on his disciples and churches. And this expressly is declared not to be given till his ascent to heaven, John viii. 39, Acts ii. 33, Ephes. iv. 8, *then he received the promised Spirit of the Father, and gave gifts unto men, which he received*, Psal. lxxviii. 18.

SECT. VIII. *Objections about the Representations of the Holy Spirit.*

THERE are many *Christians* indeed, who cannot suppose that several texts of Scripture can be explained by the *Spirit of God*, considered as an essential power or principle in the Godhead, because the Spirit of God is always represented as ministering to God the Father, or to *Jesus Christ*, as sent by both the Father and the Son, on all his messages, and seems to be distinguished from them as another person in the *Form of Baptism*, and in 1 John v. 7, where *Three bear record in heaven*, and in other Scriptures.

But we must remember, that not only the *Hebrew* tongue, but almost all languages represent many things in a personal manner, which are not real persons: such as *Life, Death, Virtue, Time, Fate, Nature, Providence, Conscience, Appetite, &c.* And we may say, *God and his Spirit*, as well as we may say *God and his Providence, God and Nature*, do this or that.

'Tis objected also, that the *Spirit of God* is sometimes represented in a lower character, as a mere messenger, John xvi. 13, "When he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; he

shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak," &c.

But we should consider, that though the *Spirit of God* itself, or the divine principle of knowledge and power in Godhead, cannot be so properly represented in a lower character, yet the influences and operations, the gifts or effects, of the Spirit of God, which are often called the *Spirit*, may be said to be sent, conveyed, or bestowed upon men; and that even not only by God the Father, or by *Jesus Christ*, but also by the hands of the apostles. *Peter and John laid their hands on the Samaritans, and they received the Holy Spirit*, Acts viii. 17.

How far any angel or inferior spirit may be admitted as an agent under the eternal and almighty Spirit of God, which may facilitate the interpretation of some Scriptures, will be considered in the *Appendix* to the second *Part* of this book.

Here I must conclude as I did before concerning our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that though with this imperfect notion of the *Spirit of God*, which I have given, a young or a weak Christian, according to this idea of the *Spirit*, may not be able to explain all the difficult texts in Scripture which refer to the Holy Spirit; yet since it appears that we may expect all the *blessings* which the Spirit bestows, and fulfil all the *duties* which the word of God requires to be performed to him, we have abundant reason to think, that this knowledge of the *Spirit of God*, as the divine principle of knowledge and power, or as the influence and effects of this principle, may be *sufficient* to *salvation*.

And if there be any difficulties, darknesses, or matters of deep dispute, which attend our enquiries into the real and exact idea of the *Holy Spirit*, 'tis certain, that this most exact idea is not necessary to be known, in order to salvation: and if in every place where we read of the *Spirit of God*, we always understand it of the divine essential power, as proceeding originally



from the Father, we shall not fall into any great mistakes on this subject ; but may go on comfortably through this state of imperfect knowledge, till we arrive at clearer light in the heavenly world.

### *A General Inference.*

NOW if such a knowledge and belief of the *Holy Trinity* as I have given, be all that is necessary in order to our salvation, what shall we think of those creed-makers, who, while they set before us a long detail of articles about it, many of which are difficult, if not impossible, to be understood, yet they arm them all with terrible *Anathemas*, they guard them before and behind with everlasting curses, and pronounce by their own authority, without the word of God, that *except a man believe this creed faithfully, he cannot be saved* : and *except every one do keep this faith of this creed, whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall everlastingly perish* ?

### A PRAYER.

BLESSED God, if this *enquiry after the ancient and original doctrine of the Trinity* has been so far favoured of thee, as to trace out any glimpse of light from thy word concerning it, which may lead the meanest of thy children into a more easy and regular acquaintance with this divine truth according to Scripture, it is here offered with all humility to thy gracious acceptance : and if it may be so far blessed by thy grace as to enable the lowest of thy worshippers here on earth to walk more comfortably in the *Christian course* ; I beseech thee let it be favoured further by thy providence, so as to diffuse that light abroad, and assist poor bewildered souls in searching thee, thy gospel, and thy salvation. And do thou

vouchsafe to give it a powerful and effectual entrance into the heart and conscience of the reader.

But on the other hand, Holy Father, if there be any glorious and important doctrine of the *Christian* faith, which is opposed or concealed, disgraced or darkened, by this *enquiry*, then I sincerely desire that this essay may be withheld or banished from the light of the world, may be buried in deep silence, and together with the author's name let it lie for ever in darkness. *Amen.*

*THE END.*

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EXTRACTS  
FROM THE AUTHOR'S WRITINGS,  
RELATING TO  
The DOCTRINE of the TRINITY,  
IN FAVOUR OF  
CHRISTIAN CANDOUR and RELIGIOUS ENQUIRY.

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WHEN we have been accustomed all our lives to a particular set of words and ideas, it is pretty hard to persuade ourselves to make any little change in our ideas or words, even though the greatest advantages might be attained by it towards the defence of the gospel; and though it might remove some of the chief embarrassments which attend any particular article of faith. I wish heartily for myself and my friends, greater freedom of soul in the humble pursuit of truth.\*

As to the various particular explications of this doctrine, and incidental arguments that attend it, I desire to believe and to write with a humble consciousness of my own ignorance, and to give my assent but in proportion to the degrees of light and evidence. I am persuaded, if every man would proportion his assent by the same rule, much of our modern assurance would be abated; we should have but few dogmatists amongst us, even in some important doctrines; and by this method perhaps the most positive and confi-

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\* See Dissertations relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity. Part II. Dis. 5. Sec. V.

dent assertors of their own opinions would become the most doubtful and modest of all men.

Besides, when I consult the Scriptures, or human writers, on so sublime a subject, I do not come with all my opinions fixed and determined, but I read in order to receive further light ; and therefore I would write as one who may be mistaken, and who is honestly seeking truth. I know the weakness of human understanding, and how easily we are led into error. I have often seen occasion to retract my former sentiments, and correct them by further discoveries ; and I esteem a modest and cautious manner of speech, in the most controverted points, to be one excellence of a fallible writer, and retraction of error to be yet a superior attainment ; and though this is made sometimes a matter of scoff among vulgar souls, it is always an honour among the wise.—

I would not willingly call every man an enemy to Christ who lies under some doubts of his supreme Godhead. My charity inclines me to believe, that some of them both read their Bibles carefully, and pray daily for divine instruction, to lead them into all truth.

I am well assured that the wisdom which comes from above, is first pure and then peaceable ; that we are required in the gospel not to call for fire from heaven, even upon such *Samaritans* who will not receive Christ at all ; but with all meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, that they may be recovered out of any dangerous snares. The method in which divine controversy has generally been written have proved fatal to religion, and utterly improper to promote the truth. When we rail, we set our opponents a railing too ; and in such a frame of spirit, we are neither fit to instruct others, nor are they fit to receive instruction. The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, nor the knowledge of Christ. These angry fits of zeal do but awaken the disorderly passions of men, and tempt them to resist every argu-

ment that comes armed with such assumed sovereignty and fire. It is God only who has a right and a power to convince the obstinate by a spirit of burning. He may clothe an angel in flame, or inspire a prophet to be the minister of his shining vengeance; but I had rather be a humble messenger of his light and love. The great God can send conviction in the language of death and ruin, but he does not exert this power till gentler methods have been tried in vain.

Besides, in contests and debates among men, much darkness is consistent with vehement heat. These qualities are found in greatest perfection in the nether world; and sometimes on earth the fiercest heat has the deepest darkness attending it. Light itself, when joined with noise and fire, has not the most happy influence to improve and refine the mind. A flash of lightning rather affrights than guides us. The voice of thunder carries more terror than instruction in it. The soul bars up all the avenues of its understanding against truth itself, when it demands entrance by such human methods of violence. It is only the gentle approaches of truth, like the morning light, which opens the windows of the soul, and makes it willing to receive all further discoveries.

If by such methods as these I shall be so far honoured of God, as to recover any who have departed from their former principles, or establish those who doubt, I am well assured that my blessed Lord will esteem it a better service done for himself, than if I had guarded his sacred doctrines by scattering all the terrors of hell round about them; than if I had thundered out damnation against disbelievers; and awakened the rage of every gainsayer without the least hope of conviction. There was once a "great and strong wind, that rent the mountains and brake the rocks in pieces; after the wind an earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, in the earthquake, or in the wind; then a still small voice was heard; God was in that voice, and visited



his prophet, who was jealous for the Lord of Hosts,  
1 Kings xix. 11, 13.\*

Such as know little of these disputes, and have never ventured to read any thing, but the writers of their own side, generally imagine that all things in their own particular scheme are clear as the light; and they are too ready to impute all the doubts or difficulties that are raised on these subjects to the want of a due regard to truth. They believe their own particular mode of explaining this great article will be as firm a faith, and make it as sacred and divine, as the article itself; and they suppose that their whole scheme is supported by all those Scriptures which are made use of to prove the deity of the Son and the Spirit. So unhappily has the Christian world been taught to mingle human schemes with divine truths.

And I cannot but take notice here, if a man has never so sincere a design to vindicate the same great doctrine which are professed and maintained by his brethren yet if he happen to step aside from the common track of human phrases, and especially if he give an exposition of some important Scriptures different from their sentiments, and the established interpretation, he runs the risk of having heresy cast on himself and his writings, even while he labours by reasoning, and clear ideas, to defend those very propositions which they themselves believe.—What scheme of explication so ever he follows, there are some hard names of modern or ancient error which lie ready to be discharged upon him.—It is hardly possible that the nicest care should exempt a man from these inconveniences; but I hope none of these things shall ever discourage me from the sincere pursuit of truth, nor provoke me to lay aside the exercise of Christian candour and charity.—

Surely those who have well known the Arian and

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\* See the Preface to Dissertations relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity. Part I.

Socinian controversies, and have given themselves leave to be acquainted with the force of argument on all sides, must acknowledge, that it would be an invaluable happiness to the Christian world, if any hypothesis of explaining the Trinity were current among us, which might have clear and distinct ideas affixed to it, that we might not be perpetually running to this refuge, "It is all mysterious and inconceivable, and therefore we must not search into it." I should be very glad if a man might be permitted to imitate the blessed work of angels, 1 Pet. i. 12, and might desire to look into the glorious things of *Christ*, without being suspected of a profane curiosity or a violation of faith.—

When I apply myself with diligence to make further enquiries into the great doctrines of the gospel, I would never make my own former opinions the standard of truth, and the rule by which to determine my future judgment. My work is always to lay the Bible before me, to consult that sacred and infallible guide, and to square and adjust all my sentiments by that certain and unerring rule. It is to this supreme judge of controversies that I pay an unreserved submission, and would derive all further light from this fountain. I thank God that I have learned to retract my former sentiments, and change them, when upon stricter search and review, they appear less agreeable to the divine standard of faith.

Though a sentence or two from any man's former writings may be cited, perhaps to confront his later thoughts, yet that is not sufficient to refute them. All that it will prove is this, that that man keeps his mind ever open to conviction, and that he is willing and desirous to change a darker for a clearer idea. It will only declare to the world, that he can part with a mistake for the hope of truth, that he dares confess himself a fallible creature, and that his knowledge is capable of improvement. It becomes the all-wise God, and not mortal man, to be unchangeable. It doth not belong to such poor imperfect beings as we

are, to remain for ever unmoveable in all the same opinions that we have once indulged, nor to stamp every sentiment with immortality. For a man to be obstinately tenacious of an old mistake, and incorrigibly fond of any obscure phrase or conception, because he has once admitted it, is the shame, and not the glory, of human nature.\*

Later days, and the maturer age of the world, have given light to many passages of the Bible, which were not well understood in the days of the fathers; and though I read their writings with sincere reverence, yet not with an absolute submission to their dictates — We ought to make use of all the advantages of increasing light, nor continue in a wrong application of Scriptures to support any point of our faith, in opposition to their most open and evident meaning.†

But after all, whatever light or knowledge we may suppose ourselves to have attained in the explication of this sublime doctrine, we ought not to be over solicitous to proselyte other Christians to our particular scheme; much less to impose it on the consciences of others. — If we labour in our zeal to proselyte the learned to our scheme, the most part of them are so deeply rooted in their old opinions, so immoveably established in their particular forms, so self-satisfied in what they believe, so much prejudiced against any further light, that we shall probably do nothing but awaken their learned anger, to fix the brand of heresy upon us, and to overwhelm the hints of any brighter discovery with clamours and hard names, and drown them in noise and darkness.

If we are too solicitous to persuade the unlearned Christian to come into any better explication of this doctrine than he has learned in his younger years, we

\* See the Preface to Dissertations relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity. Part II.

† See the Preface to the Glory of Christ as God-man displayed.



have the same huge prejudices to encounter here, as in the learned world ; nor can we hope for much better success if we attempt to change his ancient opinion by a hasty and industrious zeal. Hard names and reproaches are weapons ever at hand, and common both to the wise and the unwise, the *Greek* and the *Barbarian*. The vulgar Christian is as expert at them as the scholar.

Yet these accidental inconveniences are not a sufficient reason for our supine and perpetual contentment with confused sentiments and unintelligible speeches, about the modus of sacred truths, if clearer ideas are any way attainable. There are just and strong motives that may excite us to search into the deep things of God, and propose all our improvements in knowledge to the world and the church ; though there are no reasons or motives sufficient to impel us to impose our improved notions on others, or to raise contentions and quarrels on the account of them.—

And if it be an unreasonable thing to dictate to our Fellow-Christians, and urge our particular sentiments on them in these mysterious points, how much more culpable and domineering is it to establish any especial form of human explication of this sacred doctrine as a test of orthodoxy and Christianity ! How vain a presumption is it, with a pretence of divine authority, to impose mere human explications upon the consciences of men, and to forbid them all the sacred blessings of special communion in the gospel, unless they testify their assent to such a particular hypothesis or scheme of explication, which the imposers confess to be human, and yet impose it in their own prescribed form of words.

The persons who are guilty of this uncharitable practice may consecrate their impositions, and their excommunications, with holy names, and call them pure zeal for the divinity of Christ ; but I suspect will be found in the great day to deserve no better character than a mistaken zeal for the honour of

Christ, mingled, perhaps, with zeal for the divinity of their own notions.\*

If we must be condemned to hell for believing in consistencies, then woe be to every son and daughter of Adam. What man is there in the world free from all error? And yet every error which he holds, is perhaps inconsistent with some truth which he believes. It is hard to write Anathema upon a man's forehead, because of some inconsistencies in his opinions, while he believes all necessary truths, and practices all the necessary duties relating to God, and Christ, and his own soul.†

There have been many and very different explanations of this doctrine, embraced by some persons of most exemplary piety; such persons as have most firmly believed the general doctrine itself, and such concerning whom I could even venture to say, "May my soul be where their's is in the other world!"‡

Happy are the souls above, who see God face to face, who behold the sacred Three in that divine light, where objections and darkness are banished for ever, and the shadows are fled away! The noise of controversy and wrangling is never heard in those regions, but if it were possible for the happy inhabitants to differ in sentiment, and controversy could ascend thither, I am persuaded it would be managed without wrangling or noise. The gentleness and benevolence, the sweet serenity and candour, that adorn every spirit there, would reign through all their sacred reasonings, and wheresoever a mistake was found and rectified among those holy disputants, the voice of joy and triumph would be heard on all sides at the bright

\* See "An Essay on the true Importance of any human Schemes to explain the sacred Doctrines of the Trinity." Sec. 3.

† See "An Essay on the true Importance," &c. Sect.

‡ See the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity. Prov. 1.

and lovely appearance of truth. O that the disputes of Christians on earth might be carried on with the same heavenly candour; and might end in the same harmony and joy.\*

*An Apology for Christians of different Sentiments.*

Since our first apostacy from God has so perverted and spoiled our rational powers, and enslaved our minds to so many prejudices and passions; since the impressions of education and custom are unavoidable and necessary, deep and strong; since the affairs of the world that is under a divine curse, are so justly and unhappily ill-constituted; since capacity, leisure, application, humility, and prayer, are all found together but in a very few persons; and since the divine oracles, in matters less necessary, have so much obscurity in themselves, and so much thicker darkness cast upon them by contending parties, why should we be so much amazed or so angry, to see so many different sentiments and practices amongst men of honest piety, and desirous of truth?

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See the Preface to Dissertations relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity. Part II.

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